Bloomsburg University
A midsize, public university in Bloomsburg, PA

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Overview

Located in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, and part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

- 9,109 undergraduate students
- 78% retention rate; 41% four-year graduation rate; 63% six-year graduation rate

Background and Challenges

- Part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), which relies on unionized faculty for advising
- During a tough fiscal environment for PASSHE, Bloomsburg was dedicated to remaining on solid footing
- First-year retention was dipping about 2% each year
- Leadership set the goal of identifying a more holistic approach to supporting student success and embracing the heavy lift of being a mission-centered public-access institution

Solution

Intensive advising pilot program: SSC Faculty Fellows Initiative

Select faculty advise small cohort of undeclared freshmen, assisting with major selection, academic interventions, and non-academic support

Advising notes and success markers are tracked in SSC, with expansion to other offices planned for the future

Greater persistence for students advised through SSC Faculty Fellows Program compared to peers

+4.1%
Success Metrics Trending Slightly Downward

Outcome Metrics by Cohort Year

Retention declined by 4% from 2012 to 2014.
Striving to Improve Success Metrics

Goals for Academic Advising

Increase **student success metrics** (including GPA, retention, and progress) among undeclared students

Successfully **transition undeclared freshmen into a major** by their sophomore year

Promote **the use of SSC** by faculty for advising students in all departments

Improve institutional **retention-to-completion percentage**, supporting school-wide strategic goal

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How can we encourage advisors and other support staff to be more **intentional and purposeful** in how they engage students?
Introducing the SSC Faculty Fellows Initiative

Provost Encourages Faculty to Apply for New Intensive Advising Program

SSC Faculty Fellows Initiative

In the spring of 2016, Bloomsburg invited any interested faculty to apply for a new pilot advising program charged with overseeing a small caseload of undeclared freshmen and implementing SSC as an advising and planning tool in their department.

Before Launch
Faculty are disengaged; many don’t prioritize advising
Because faculty are unionized, leadership struggles to mandate advising standards

Spring 2016
Provost works with Enrollment and Academic Achievement to develop a proposal and application for SSC Faculty Fellows Initiative

Summer 2016
Faculty Fellows are selected by the Provost and allocated a 25% course reduction so they can begin training and advising students over the summer

Fall 2016
Faculty Fellows advise assigned students on major selection, registration, and GPA improvement through tutoring and supplemental instruction
Faculty and Students Are Set Up for Success

Advisors Have the Time, and Students Have the Interest

- Assigned cohort of 35-40 students
- 10-15 SSC Faculty Fellows
- First-time freshman
- Undeclared or undecided major
- Interested in faculty’s “meta-major” department

- Have small, manageable caseloads to optimally serve assigned students
- Receive a 25% course-load reduction, allowing them to focus more time on advising
What Do Faculty Fellows Do?

Time Required for all Responsibilities per Semester

- **Set Success Markers** for departments, measured in SSC (10 hrs)
- Develop and lead workshops on SSC for faculty and staff (20 hrs)
- Meet and connect directly with assigned students (90 hrs)
- Create course schedules based on major pathways (5 hrs)
- Arrange presentations on major options for students to attend (10 hrs)
- Work with Professional and Career Services (5 hrs)

Faculty Fellows get a 25% course-load reduction, allowing them to focus more time on advising.
Intrusive Advising Beyond Academics

Faculty Fellows Monitor and Support Cohorts Holistically

**Major Selection and Progress**

- Help students **apply to a major**, referring students to another faculty advisor or other resources when appropriate

**Academic Intervention**

- Support **students on academic probation**, including intervention and schedule adjustment

**Nonacademic Support**

- Refer students to Financial Aid and Bursar’s Office to **resolve financial issues** in a timely manner

- **Intervene with advisees** who miss classes, have low grades, or miss advising meetings

- **Connect students with alumni, employers, and opportunities to develop real-world skills** through “Professional U” program

**Provide regular updates on student meetings in SSC**
Reflecting on the Outcomes

Assessing Metrics for Possible Expansion of the Program

Assessment of 2016 SSC Faculty Fellows Pilot

- Overall GPA at the end of summer 2017 compared to cohort
- Percentage of students with full-time schedules for fall 2017 compared to cohort
- Number of status changes and notes on students in SSC as an indicator of engagement between advisor and student, as well as use of the SSC
- Record of student follow-through on recommended services
- Percentage of students who declare a major
- Overall usage of SSC
Out of 414 total students in the SSC Faculty Fellows program...
22% declared a major in their first year
70% persisted into their sophomore year
99% were advised using the SSC platform
Preliminary SSC Faculty Fellows Initiative Results

Persistence Impact on SSC Faculty Fellow Students
Summer 2016-Fall 2017

- Greater persistence for students advised through SSC Faculty Fellows Program (+4.2%)
- Average GPA improvement from first to second semester (+0.2)
- In-state tuition per semester gained from the persisting SSC Fellow Students ($63K)

SSC Fellow Students: 69.7%
Non-SSC Fellow Students: 65.5%

Control Group n=8,352
Looking Forward
## What’s Next?

### Continuing Efforts to Support Student Success

#### Continuing the Faculty Fellows Initiative

*Rolling out intrusive, intentional faculty advising to a new cohort of undeclared incoming freshmen*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>304</th>
<th>Students participating in new cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>New Faculty Fellows trained in SSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Returning Faculty Fellows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>Advisor-to-student ratio</td>
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</tbody>
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#### Summer Preparatory Academy (SPA)

*College preparation program for incoming freshmen who have demonstrated potential but require additional support to succeed*

**Student Requirements**

- Complete College Reading and Study Skills course
- Achieve 2.0+ GPA
- Attend intrusive advising meetings

**Outcomes for 2017 Cohort**

- 87% Percentage of summer 2017 cohort who earned a 2.0+ GPA and were eligible to enroll in the fall
- Advisors stay with SPA students until major declaration and are then tracked in SSC as secondary support
- Students who don’t have a 2.0 GPA can earn 9 community college credits for evaluation to return to Bloomsburg

### SSC Guide Launch

Self-service mobile app to help freshmen complete necessary actions, access resources, and overcome barriers to success

### Coordinated Care Network

Roll out Campus to other offices, allowing various student-facing staff to monitor and contribute to student success